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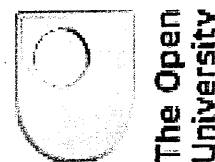
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**Investigating English Teachers' Views on the Concept of Learner Autonomy
in 9th and 10th Grades in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey**

A dissertation submitted to the Open University for the degree of

Master of Research in Education

Betul Khalil

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates teachers' views on the concept of learner autonomy, including the aspects of learning most suited to the fostering of learner autonomy, challenges to its development and its contribution to the foreign language proficiency. Participants in this study are 40 English teachers working in 9th and/or 10th Grades in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey. In this study the data collection methods used are questionnaire survey administered online and follow-up interviews conducted face-to-face with three questionnaire respondents individually. The findings indicated that the majority of the participants had positive dispositions towards the concept of learner autonomy. For them, however some areas of teaching and learning were more suited to the fostering of the concept in their classrooms than others. These were; encouraging learners to find their own explanations of classroom tasks, encouraging them to explore learning styles and procedures, assessing one's progress weekly, assessing one's progress monthly, deciding the course topic, establishing short-term objectives and selecting audio-visual resources, respectively. A number of challenges to the fostering of learner autonomy were reported by the teachers. These were learner-related, institutional and socio-cultural. Finally, it was found that the majority of the participants agreed that learner autonomy could result in higher degrees of foreign language proficiency. Thus this study suggests that in-service teacher training should be arranged to support teachers in their classroom practices in relation to the fostering of learner autonomy. It also seems important that schools and teachers should be given more flexibility for making their own choices by the Ministry of National Education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Addressing the members of the teachers' union congress in Dolmabahce Palace in 1924, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey said the following which now adorns the opening page of the English teaching curriculum: *'Teachers! The republic expects you to bring up generations having free minds, free wisdom and free conscience.'* The Turkish education system seems to have at times lost sight of his advice for democratic education which empowers students; and has instead tended to conceive of them as passive recipients of knowledge and of teachers as its transmitter (Yilmaz, 2009). The situation has not been very different in the field of English language education, either. As a result of traditional teaching methods, many learners have failed to develop competence in English language (Sert, 2006; Tutunis, 2011), the most widely taught foreign language at all stages of the education system in the country (Karahan, 2007). The following extract is taken from an interview conducted with the previous Minister of Education and published in a popular Turkish newspaper, Haberturk in August, 2011: *'Starting from 4th grade we teach students English for the next ten years of their education life until tertiary level. At the end, we watch them graduate without being able to speak a single sentence in English. Students are not able to say even a simple sentence such as 'how old are you?'* (Translated by the author).

In order to improve the situation on one hand and to facilitate accession to the European Union on the other hand, the Ministry of National Education (MONE), the central authority responsible for the operation of all educational institutions (Gozuitok, 2003) has introduced many reforms and changes in English Language Teaching (ELT) systems in the country (Kirkoz, 2005, Eskicumali and Turedi, 2010), which will be discussed later in detail in Chapter 2. Inevitably, learner autonomy which places the learner at the centre of learning as opposed to teacher-centred approaches has found itself highly valued in the system. The concept echoed throughout the English teaching curriculum for 9th and 10th Graders for the first time at high school level in 2007 and their teachers were assigned the role of nurturing autonomous behaviours (Boyno, 2011). However, the presentation of theoretical ideas in policy documents seems to be one thing; adaptation of these ideas in the classrooms is another. To date, according to some commentators, not much appears to have changed in

the classrooms with regard to the fostering of learner autonomy (Ustunoglu, 2009, Boyno, 2011).

1.2 The aim of the study and the research questions

This study was set off in order to investigate English teachers' views on the concept of learner autonomy in 9th and 10th Grades in Anatolian High Schools, the most common state-run high schools in Turkey. The rationale for investigating teachers' views for this study is twofold. First, developing learner autonomy is to a large extent the teachers' responsibility and it involves a change in the teachers' role in the classroom (Lam, 2003). Second, teachers' beliefs and views have a powerful influence on what they do in the classroom (Borg, 2003). I believe such an investigation of teachers' views, which have been neglected in the area of learner autonomy in the context of Anatolian High Schools can be helpful in providing insights into the most suitable ways in which learner autonomy can be fostered in these contexts. An investigation of such views also can be very informative in identifying the reasons why learner autonomy does not seem to have been widely adopted in English language classrooms in Turkey.

From a critical review of the literature, which will be presented in the next chapter, the following research questions are derived;

1. What are the views of a sample of English teachers working with 9th and/or 10th Graders in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey on the concept of learner autonomy?
2. Which aspects of language learning do these teachers feel are most suited to the fostering of learner autonomy?
3. What do these teachers perceive as challenges in fostering learner autonomy in these particular contexts?
4. To what extent do these teachers believe that there is a link between learner autonomy and levels of second language proficiency?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review begins with a brief overview of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Turkey to provide background to the study (2.1). The next sections introduce the concept of autonomy in language learning (2.2); its definition (2.2.1), and autonomous learner characteristics (2.2.2). The chapter then goes on to discuss justifications for fostering learner autonomy in the classroom (2.3), its desirability and feasibility in non-western countries (2.4) as well as in formal school contexts (2.5). Next, approaches to the fostering of learner autonomy are explored (2.6). The chapter then presents how learner autonomy has been implemented in Turkey (2.7). Finally the most relevant studies on the concept of learner autonomy are presented (2.8).

2.1 An overview of English Language Teaching in Turkey

In order to understand the Turkish education system, it would have been useful to go back to The Tanzimat Period, the second half of the eighteenth century, when the early signs of Westernization movements could be seen (Kirköz, 2005). However, for the purposes of presenting a recent picture of ELT in Turkey, I will look at the implementation of major ELT curriculum reform, initiated in 1997 by the Ministry of National Education (MONE). The reform has continued until now in order to achieve the standardization of ELT in line with the norms of the European Union (Kirköz, 2005, Eskicumali and Turedi, 2010).

2.1.1 The 1997 reform

Until the 1997 Curriculum reform, the Turkish Education system consisted of five-years of primary education, three years at elementary level, and three-years of high school education (9th, 10th and 11th grades) that prepared students for Higher Education. The 1997 reform integrated primary and secondary education into a single stage, extending the duration of primary education from the previous 5 to 8 years (Eskicumali and Turedi, 2010). A further consequence of the reform was the introduction of English for Grade 4 and Grade 5 students, thus shifting the introduction of English from secondary to primary schools in order to provide a longer exposure to the foreign language (Kirköz, 2005). The 1997 curriculum stands as an important milestone in the history because, for the first time, it introduced the concept of the communicative approach into ELT in Turkey (Kirkgöz 2005). The curriculum promotes student-centred learning, to replace the traditional teacher-centred view of learning (Grossman, Onkol and Sands, 2007). Another consequence of the

1997 curriculum reform was reorganization of the teacher education programs in a way that supported this new approach to learning (Cakiroglu and Cakiroglu, 2003).

Following this reform, in 2002 MONE made a decision about Anatolian High Schools. As in many other countries, Turkey has both state-run schools and private ones. Public schools are classified as general, vocational and Anatolian. Among these schools, Anatolian High Schools have had an important role in the teaching of English (Saricoban and Saricoban, 2012). When the first Anatolian High School opened in the 1950s, the aim was to meet the demands of those families who wanted their children to learn a foreign language but could not afford private school education (Eskicumali and Turedi, 2010). The length of education in these schools was four-years, the first of which involved intensive preparatory English classes. In the following three years, the medium of instruction for Maths and Science was English. In 2002, it was decided instead that teaching of these subjects would be in Turkish (Kirköz, 2005). The next section will give an overview of the changes which have been made since then.

2.1.2 2005 and onwards

Since 2005, language policy in Turkey has gone through further changes. The 1997 curriculum has been redesigned in line with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for Languages (Ozsevik, 2010). The revised curriculum is still communicatively oriented, but it is a much more comprehensive and coherent version of the previous one (Ozsevik, 2010). In addition, MONE introduced a new assessment system in conformity with the norms of the EU; the suggested means of assessment in the recent curriculum document is based on the European Language Portfolio (Kirköz, 2005). During this period the duration of secondary-level education has been increased from the previous three to four years (Eskicumali and Turedi, 2010) and the one-year English language preparation programme offered in Anatolian High Schools has been abolished to achieve standardization in ELT in all types of schools (Kirköz, 2005). Finally, as a result of a new policy developed in 2010 which aimed to maximise the quality of ELT nationwide, MONE gradually transformed all general high schools in the country into Anatolian High Schools by 2013 (MONE, 2010).

Furthermore, since 2011 9th grade students are required to take a school-based English exam at the beginning of the first term which aims to determine their English language proficiency levels (MONE, 2011). MONE redesigned the English teaching curriculum in 2012 and involved 6 year-old-children in state primary schools in foreign language courses

for two hours a week as of the 2013-2014 academic years. This period was also the end of the eight-year continuous education requirement because now students study for a total of 12 years. Some further changes have been implemented in Turkey recently. Under the FATİH Project, schools are equipped with the latest information technologies (FatihProject, 2013). The project has been in operation since 2012 and so far over 12,800 tablet PCs have been issued to 9th Grade students (FatihProject, 2013). The role of technology in relation to the concept of learner autonomy will become clearer later in the chapter.

2.2 Autonomy in Language Learning

Autonomy is a non-linguistic concept imported into the field of language learning and teaching (Benson, 2009; Zembylas and Lamb, 2008). Originally the idea was applied in a political context and referred to emerging independent city-states. The notion was then extended by Plato from city-states to the individual, an independent, free-thinking person (Zembylas and Lamb, 2008). Autonomy which places the learner at the centre of learning has been proposed as a goal of education by many philosophers and educationalists such as Galileo, Rousseau, Dewey, Kilpatrick, Freire and Illich (Benson, 2001). In 1971 it entered the field of language learning through the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project (Benson, 2001). The project was launched only a few years after a period of change had started in language learning pedagogy with the move from teacher-centred learning environments towards a more learner-directed view of the classroom (Little, 2007). The earliest document which can be found in the area of autonomy in language learning is a report written by Henri Holec for the Council of Europe in 1979 (published in 1981). Since then, there is a remarkable growth of interest in autonomy in language teaching and learning across the globe (Dickinson, 1987; Little, 1991; Camilleri, 1999; Sinclair, 2000; Benson, 2001; Yildirim, 2005; Sabanci, 2007; Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012, for example). We have witnessed for example a rapid expansion of the literature debating many aspects of learner autonomy in a variety of contexts such as the meaning of autonomy, its desirability and feasibility in specific contexts, and so on. We have also witnessed a noticeable thrust in language teaching policies of many countries towards principles directly or indirectly related to the development of autonomy (Lamb, 2008). In the sections that follow, the literature concerning these issues will be reviewed.

2.2. 1 Definition(s) of learner autonomy

There is no single definition of learner autonomy in the literature. The most quoted definition is that of Holec (1981): '*the ability to take charge of one's own learning*' (p.3). For him, learner autonomy is when the learner is willing to and able to take charge of his/her learning, i.e. independently;

- *Determining objectives,*
- *Defining the contents and progressions,*
- *Selecting methods and techniques to be used,*
- *Monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking,*
- *Evaluating what has been acquired* (1981, p.3).

While some educationalists (e.g. Dam, 1999) find Holec's definition from the early eighties still very useful, others (e.g. Miller, 2009, Paiva, 2005) argue that it does not tell teachers how to achieve autonomy in their classrooms. Moreover, for them in this definition the question of what exactly taking charge of one's own learning involves remains unanswered.

Benson (2001) who defines autonomy as '*the capacity to take control of one's own learning*' suggests that autonomy involves control over three major levels of the teaching and learning process. These are learning management, cognitive processing and the content of learning. Benson maintains that these levels are clearly interdependent: autonomous language learners exercise control over cognitive processes through an understanding of the psychology of learning, over learning management through their learning behaviour, and over learning content through their choice of learning situations. The control element of autonomy over learning is argued to have the advantage of being more observable than a capacity (Benson, 2001). However, the view of autonomy as control seems no less problematic than the view of autonomy as capacity. After all, one's exercise of any control over learning certainly requires the capacity to do so. If so, where does this capacity come from? What exactly is meant by control? Benson does not seem to offer any satisfactory answers to these questions (Lewis and Vialleton, 2011). Instead, he takes a similar position to Little (1991) who defines autonomy simply as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action and goes on to say that '*it may be neither necessary nor desirable to define autonomy too precisely, because it is a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times*' (Benson, 2001, p. 47).

Autonomy in language learning is a complex phenomenon which seems to consist of a variety of elements. However, this should not be an excuse to avoid defining autonomy. Sinclair (2000) is one of those in the field who thinks that the literature is in need of a realistic definition. The following list contains thirteen aspects of autonomy suggested by Sinclair that include the different dimensions of the concept used in the field of language teaching and learning:

1.	Autonomy is a construct of capacity
2.	Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning
3.	The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate
4.	Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal
5.	There are degrees of autonomy
6.	The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable
7.	Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent
8.	Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process – i.e. conscious reflection and decision-making; social and cultural awareness
9.	Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies
10.	Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom
11.	Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension
12.	The promotion of autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension
13.	Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures

Table 1: Defining the concept of learning autonomy (Sinclair, 2000)

Sinclair’s list can be seen as an important attempt to contribute to our understanding of autonomy. Many issues present in the field are raised in it. Drawing on Sinclair, the following is the definition used in this study: learner autonomy is a construct of capacity which presupposes (a) a willingness on the part of learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning; (b) the ability to act independently and in cooperation with his/her peers and tutors; and (c) conscious awareness of the learning process. The study recognizes that learner autonomy is likely to vary from person to person and within the same person, from context to context, time to time and task to task (Benson and Cooker, 2013).

2.2.2 Characteristics of an autonomous learner

Learner autonomy is like an art; there is no agreement on its definition, but all seem to know what an autonomous learner is like (Reinders and White, 2011). Several authors for example have suggested different characteristics to describe autonomous learners (Little, 1991; Benson, 2001; Dam 1995, etc.). In this study, I draw on Dam's (1990, 1995) characterization of the autonomous learner. There are two reasons for this: First, her account of learner autonomy is based on her own experiences as a language teacher, committed develop learner autonomy in her classrooms; and second her teenage mixed ability students are close, in age and educational level, to those in 9th and 10th grades in Anatolian High Schools. Dam defines an autonomous learner as one who *'chooses aims and purposes and sets goals; chooses materials, methods and tasks; exercises choices and purpose in organizing and carrying out the chosen tasks; and chooses criteria for evaluation'* (1990, p.18). How a teacher can nurture these characteristics in a classroom environment is an important question that will be addressed later in this chapter. However, in order to make more sense of autonomy, it is important to acknowledge why it has assumed such importance in the field of language learning. The following section will address this issue.

2.3 Justifications for fostering learner autonomy in the classroom

A considerable amount of literature suggests that the development of autonomy in language learning is desirable, important and even necessary. Ustunoglu (2009) for example argues that the encouragement of classroom autonomy maximizes learner performance and helps develop motivation and self-esteem which, in turn, boosts achievement rates. Similarly, Dam (1995) shares her own experiences as an example of why autonomy is necessary in language learning: *'I tried to involve the pupils- or rather forced them to be involved- in the decisions concerning, for example, the choice of classroom activities and learning materials. I soon realized that [...] this led to better learning'* (p.2). Elsewhere, Dam along with Little (1998) argues that more learner involvement in making choices and decision in all aspects of learning (e.g. goal setting, selecting material, pacing, etc.) can make learning more purposeful, thus, leading to greater success. What these authors suggest is fostering a kind of autonomy which is concerned with the development of factors such as self-esteem, motivation and success. However, an important point that needs to be noted here is that the relationship between these factors and learner autonomy is somewhat problematic. Part of the literature (e.g. Little, 1991) for example suggests that learner autonomy is a basic human need which is nourished by, and in turn nourishes motivation. Littlewood (1996) who disagrees with this idea argues that

motivation is one of the basic components of learner autonomy and its absence may impede the fostering of learner autonomy. Similarly, there seems to be a lack of empirical evidence on the issue of whether learner autonomy leads to better second/foreign language proficiency (Benson, 2001). Nevertheless, part of the appeal of autonomy is that it seems such an unquestionably desirable goal. However it is important to acknowledge that a body of literature on the other hand questions the desirability, importance, necessity and feasibility of learner autonomy in different cultural contexts, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.4 Desirability and feasibility of learner autonomy in non-Western contexts

The starting point for the arguments is the idea that the concept of autonomy is central to western liberal thought; thus it is unsuited to non-Western contexts (Riley, 1988; Pennycook, 1997). These views are usually based on certain cultural traits of non-Western learners, who are generally portrayed as being oriented towards the acceptance of power and authority (Littlewood, 1999; Thang, 2005). One question that needs to be asked, however, is whether these orientations that non-Western learners display can be attributed to cultural factors or the structural elements of the educational system (Pierson, 1996). Finding an answer to these questions and drawing a conclusion supporting one view over another seems to be difficult. In this study, drawing on Sinclair's framework, I accept that context sensitiveness is central to autonomy; that is, it can be interpreted and implemented differently in different cultures. As Gieve and Clark (2005) claim, success seems to depend on appropriate conditions being provided to learners. Therefore it is important to prepare an appropriate plan for fostering autonomous learning before making any attempt to promote learner autonomy in different contexts (Cotterall, 1995). This plan may help identify possible difficulties and constraints while implementing autonomous learning.

2.5 The fostering of learner autonomy in school contexts: is it possible?

Criticism of learner autonomy is not limited to the cultural traits of learners. The idea of learner autonomy as an educational goal is present in language curricula across the globe, including Turkey (Raya, 2008; Ustunoglu, 2009). Some researchers, policy makers and practitioners take it for granted that learner autonomy is an educational goal (Raya, 2008). The possibility and desirability of learner autonomy in a school context was the focus of a paper published by Hand (2006). Against autonomy as an unsatisfactory educational goal, he suggests that '*there is no quality of character one could plausibly call autonomy at which it is reasonable for educators to aim*' (p.2). However, a serious problem with his argument is that autonomy in his understanding entails nothing more than the freedom to exercise choice, thus

he seems to imply that in an environment where the freedom to exercise choice does not exist, there is no point in aiming for autonomy. Raya (2008) challenges this view by referring to Foucault's game metaphor to illustrate the school context: *'In a game, one experiences freedom and constraints. Players must follow the rules and respond at certain points... Players are constrained by the rules but within these rules there exist an endless number of possibilities and options. Players can use the rules creatively to their own advantage. Freedom and constraint coexist in a school context...'* (p. 9). It is hard to disagree with Raya because freedom and constraint coexist in any part of our life. In a school context, especially there may be a number of constraints such as lack of support given to the teachers and students by educational authorities (Camilleri, 1999) or lack of materials (Sabanci, 2007). However, what is important is to reflect on and to deal with these constraining factors (Raya, 2008; Lewis and Vialleton, 2011). To conclude, the fostering of learner autonomy in school contexts can be very complex and challenging (Smith and Ushioda, 2009). The section that follows will review some of the approaches proposed for fostering autonomy in the classroom.

2.6 Fostering learner autonomy in the classroom

Developing autonomy in foreign language education seems to be a complex process that requires time, commitment, expertise and explicit pedagogical knowledge, and it demands constant effort on the part of teachers and learners, says Kohonen (2003). According to Dam (1995) it is a matter of getting started, of taking the first small steps towards creating a learning environment. The literature offers a few answers to the question of how one can get started, or what these small steps are (Nunan, 1997, Cotterall, 1995). Several approaches to fostering learner autonomy have been proposed such as learner training (Esch, 1997), strategy training (Cohen, 1999), self access and language advising (Reinders, 2010). Additionally, part of the literature suggests the use of some specific tools for the fostering of learner autonomy such as the European Language Portfolio (ELP) which may foster student involvement in assessment (Little, 2009), and logbooks which may help the learner be aware of his/her learning goals and improvement (Dam, 2009). Furthermore, the use of technological tools which provide access to rich resources for learning is argued to be helpful in developing learner autonomy (Reinders, 2010). It is important to highlight however that technology may be detrimental to the fostering of learner autonomy if the learners are not prepared or supported for this (Reinders and White, 2011).

Some of the tools mentioned in this section so far such as ELP or technology do not form part of regular classroom practice (Reinders, 2010). How then can an individual teacher implement learner autonomy in the classroom as part of her/his teaching? Little (1991, 2001) suggests

that the first things that should be done is to involve students in the management of their own learning in the classroom. Elsewhere (2004) he goes on to say that teachers who want to foster the development of learner autonomy must do three things: engage learners to share responsibility for the learning process, help learners to think critically when they plan, monitor and evaluate their learning and use the target language as the principal medium of language learning (Little, 2004). When answering the same question of how to foster learner autonomy in classroom settings, Dam (2011) lays considerable emphasis on the role of teachers and calls them to shift their focus from teaching to learning and to provide various options for the learners to choose. Furthermore, she suggests teachers should present their learners with the demands outlined in the curriculum for their learning within which they can set their individual goals. While doing so, she argues it is equally important that any restrictions on their freedom to choose and act are made clear. Many other suggestions, guidelines, and practical frameworks exist in the literature (e.g. Cotterall, 1995). It is, however important to be realistic about the extent to which they help individuals develop learner autonomy. According to Reinders (2010) none of these guidelines guarantee the development of learner autonomy, but they involve a shift of focus from teacher to the learners.

2.7 Tracing the concept of learner autonomy in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey

Having addressed a number of key issues on the concept of learner autonomy, it is now important to examine how it is implemented at high school level in Turkey. To begin with, in 2007 and 2008, MONE issued an English teaching curriculum for 9th and 10th grades which highlighted individual and group control and assigned teachers the responsibility of nurturing autonomous students (Boyno, 2011). The curriculum which was and is still based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) was redesigned in 2011 for all levels of high school education. It underlines the importance of three imperatives: education for democratic citizenship, education for life and education for lifelong learning (MONE, 2011, p.8). Responsibility (Holec, 1981), freedom (Little, 1991), social and cultural awareness (Sinclair, 2000), solidarity, development of self-respect (Dam, 1995), creativity and the learners' ambition to continue to learn throughout life are among the national goals in Turkey (p. 9). These aspirations can be perceived as autonomy-related because of their main focus on the learner.

The concept of learner autonomy which manifests itself through the English teaching curriculum in many ways such as at the levels of rationale (p.2), learning goals (p.5); teacher and learner roles (p.18, 19, 20) is defined in the curriculum as follows (MONE, 2011):

Öğrenen özerkliği: Öğrenenin kendi öğrenme sorumluluğunu alması ve öğretmenin tüm sınıf içi ve dışı etkinliklerde öğrenenin gereksinimlerine ve isteklerine cevap veren bir uygulama gerçekleştirmesi, dil öğrenmeyi aktif ve bağımsız olarak uygulayabilme (syf. 551).

Learner autonomy: learner taking responsibility for his/her own learning, and teacher being able to teach in a way which responds to the individual needs; being able to learn a language actively with others and independently (p.551) (Translated by the author).

In addition to the stress laid on the concept of learner autonomy in the current English teaching curriculum, MONE's recent attempt to implement the European Language Portfolio, a tool which takes its roots from the principles of learner autonomy and self-assessment in language learning (Little, 2004) is notable. The ELP was a project, implemented by the Council of Europe to spread its use in all countries who are its members. Turkey piloted the project in 13 high schools in 2000 (Karacaoglu and Cubuk, 2002). During this process, an in-service teaching program for teachers piloting the programme was designed accordingly, and finally, a seminar on the ELP was held in October 2001 in Ankara (Egel, 2009). In the academic year 2009-2010 MONE decided to officially launch the ELP for learners aged 15+ and for learners aged 10-14 (Egel, 2009). In addition to the implementation of the ELP, the equipment of students and classes with the latest information technologies can be seen as another step which may provide opportunities for the development of learner autonomy in the classroom, given the possible link between learner autonomy and technology referred to above.

2.8 Related studies undertaken to investigate teachers' views on the concept of learner autonomy

Many studies have been conducted in the field of autonomy in language learning. The focus here will be on those studies which investigated the views of English teachers on autonomy in language learning. To begin with, Camilleri (1999) investigated English teachers' attitudes towards learner autonomy. The study involved in-service English teachers in Malta, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Poland, Estonia, and Belorussia. Although the teachers participating in Camilleri's study did not express strong resistance towards learner autonomy, it was claimed in the study that for autonomous learning to be successful, teachers should not work in isolation but should be supported by school and educational authorities. Camilleri suggested that any space denied by these authorities to teachers and learners for flexibility, risk taking, adjustment and decision-making may result in resistance to autonomy.

Yıldırım (2005) investigated the perceptions and behaviours of English Language Teaching (ELT) students related to learner autonomy. In the study, Turkish ELT students were considered as both learners of English as a foreign language and future teachers of English as a foreign language. The study focused firstly on ELT students' perceptions and behaviours related to learner autonomy as learners of English and secondly on ELT students' perceptions and behaviour related to learner autonomy as future teachers of English. The study also investigated if teacher education for English language specialists makes a difference in their perceptions of learner autonomy. Two different questionnaires; one for learners of English and one for future teachers of English were used to collect data. In order to reinforce the quantitative data, follow-up interview sessions were conducted with some of the participants. The findings of the study revealed that as learners of English, the participants were ready to take responsibility for and control of their own learning. As for future ESL teachers, the results indicated that participants held positive beliefs in relation to learner autonomy.

Sabancı (2007) looked at English Language teachers' views on learner autonomy in primary and secondary schools in Eskisehir in Turkey. The findings of this study revealed that the majority of participating teachers were supportive of learner autonomy. However, the results confirmed that having a positive attitude and being psychologically ready, namely being aware of the concept, might not signify that teachers knew how to promote learner autonomy in their own contexts. Sabancı (2007) claimed that in order for teachers to be able to promote autonomy, adjustments should be made in the curriculum and better teaching conditions such as less crowded classroom, more teaching hours, more teaching materials must be provided to the teachers.

A recent study by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) studied the beliefs and reported practices regarding learner autonomy of 61 teachers of English at a large university language centre in Oman, a Middle East country. Questionnaires and interviews were used in the study. One of the findings of the study was that teachers saw learner autonomy in terms of strategies for independent and individual learning and had positive ideas about it. However, it was clear from the findings that the teachers had some negative views about the feasibility of fostering learner autonomy in practice. Borg and Al-Busaidi also explored the factors that hinder the development of learner autonomy. According to the researchers, these factors were students' lack of motivation, limited experience of independent learning, and institutional factors such as a fixed curriculum. One of the limitations of the study was that the researchers did not observe the actual classroom practices of the teachers under study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents methodological aspects of the study. It begins with a section describing the overall research design of the study and elucidates the reason for using the particular design to address the research questions (3.1). Next it introduces the data collection methods: an online survey questionnaire (3.1.1) and follow-up interviews (3.1.2), then documents the ethical procedures that were followed (3.2). Finally, it handles data analysis (3.3).

3.1 Research design and the methods of data collection

In order to answer research questions appropriately in a short time span, the study was designed in a way to be workable. Thus, mixed methods which can be defined as *'the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study'* (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17) was chosen as a research approach. The rationale for choosing such a combination of methods was grounded on the use of triangulation to best understand the research problems by obtaining different but complementary data on the same topic (Creswell and Clark, 2007). The research paradigm underlying the study is pragmatism which places the research problem as central and encompasses all approaches to understanding the problem (Creswell and Clark, 2007). According to pragmatism, there is an external world independent of our minds but it is denied that reality can be determined once and for all (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Thus, in determining which data collection methods to use, I took a broad approach to the nature of reality and the possibility of objective truth; more importantly, I valued both objective and subjective knowledge. Consequently, in this study two main data collection methods were used: an online survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) and follow-up interviews (Appendix 2). The limited time span prevented the use of other methods such as classroom observations which would have been useful to explore the extent to which learner autonomy was actually practised in the context of the participants.

3.1.1 Online survey questionnaire

The first data collection method in this study was a survey questionnaire administered online in order to speed data collection process. Survey Monkey (Appendix 7) was selected as the questionnaire software because of its ease of use (Marra and Bogue, 2006). The

questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data through closed questions in which a list of acceptable responses was provided to the respondents (Fowler, 2002) by means of a Likert-scale response format, and qualitative data through free text responses. The questionnaire comprised 5 sections (Appendix 1). The first two sections were designed to collect some demographic and background information including;

- years of experience,
- type of school setting
- highest qualification
- teaching hours per week
- gender
- average class size

The third section was adapted from a widely used questionnaire in the field developed by Camilleri (1999) for a study to investigate English teachers' views on learner autonomy in six European countries: Malta, Slovenia, The Netherlands, Poland, Estonia and Belorussia. This ensured comparability of my findings with an established widely used survey tool. There were 13 questions and sub items in the section referring to various aspects of language teaching and learning (Chapter 4, 4.3). The aim was to examine participants' overall views of learner autonomy and to find out which aspects of teaching English might be more suitable than others for the fostering and implementation of learner autonomy in their contexts. In order to enrich and explain the quantitative results in the words of participants, a free text response box was attached at the bottom of this section. With the original questionnaire, respondents were asked to make comments for each aspect. However, I thought this would discourage teachers from completing the questionnaire and make it look unduly long. For the same purpose, 2 free text response boxes were inserted into section 4 which was designed to find out teachers' views on whether learner autonomy presents particular challenges for Turkish educational environment and the extent to which they feel learner autonomy results in higher levels of language proficiency.

The questionnaire proved to be a useful tool for the purposes of this study in two ways. First, it allowed me to ask the same questions of all participants quickly and efficiently in a short period of time (Fowler, 2002). It is important to state, however that it provided less detailed information. Second, it helped me in contextualizing my interview study. I selected my interviewees by reviewing the answers given to the items in the questionnaire. That is, purposeful sampling was employed in the next stage of the study by means of the data obtained from questionnaires. Despite common use of questionnaires in social sciences, they are often critiqued for their lack of reliability. Some scholars (e.g. Punch, 1998) have argued that the reliability of questionnaires can be tested by administering the

same questionnaire to the same group of respondents after an interval; or by employing the same questionnaire on two different samples. In this study, reliability calculations have not been carried out. Elsewhere however (e.g. in Durmus, 2006; Sabanci. 2007), Cronbach – alpha values of Camilleri’s questions which constituted third section of my questionnaire were calculated and high reliability levels were reported by the researchers. Nevertheless, it is important to underline here that the views of participants are subject to change over time, and responses obtained by each individual may vary. Hence, I recognize that no questionnaire is error-free and all have some unreliability (Punch, 1998). Finally, the participants of this study were 40 Turkish teachers of English with high proficiency levels in English as a foreign language. Thus, the questionnaire was administered in English. One thing that needs to be addressed is that the respondents were asked to make their comments either in Turkish or English. The purpose of offering a choice was to elicit more extensive responses by enabling them to choose the language they feel most comfortable with.

3.1.2 Follow-up Interviews

The second data collection method used in the study was follow-up interviews undertaken individually face-to-face with three questionnaire respondents. The interview model used was semi-structured which allowed me to combine open and closed questions with the purpose of eliciting data in greater depth. The use of this model gave me also an opportunity to ask additional questions about the responses given to the questionnaire items by the individual participant. It is noteworthy to mention that it gave great flexibility to the interviewee in answering the questions, too. Moreover, the semi-structured interview format was applicable to the mixed methods research approach I used for this study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The interview questions have been evaluated in terms of content validity and clarity of the items in a supervision meeting which took place in December, 2012. They were later redrafted prior to the interviews. Total number of interview questions was 15-(Appendix 2). However, additional questions were posed as mentioned recently depending on what each teacher said in the questionnaire. The questions were informally practised in the week the work was carried out. Although I had previous interviewing experience, practising questions proved to be very helpful in developing interviewing skills especially by increasing the familiarity with the ordering of the questions.

Another important point I would like to highlight here is the translation of the interview questions into Turkish. My purpose in translating these questions was initially to submit an application to MONE in order to obtain approval which allows me to carry out my research

in Turkey. While conducting a research in one's own society it can be very difficult to suspend one's preconceptions (Hammerley and Atkinson, 2007). I had for example my own preconception, which derived both from social science research, investigated Turkish people's attitudes towards English language (Buyukkantarcioglu, 2004; Zok, 2010) and from my previous experiences as an English learner and teacher trainee. This was that some Turkish people may not find it very comfortable to speak to other Turkish citizens in English in public settings. As a result, interviewees were given an option to choose which language they wanted to use. I believe the decision was particularly appropriate not only to the pragmatic worldview adopted in the study but also to the topic of interest under investigation; learner autonomy which is associated with freedom of choice by many scholars (e.g. Little, 1991). To conclude, prior to interviews I redrafted my translation and asked a bilingual academic who was an acquaintance of mine to check the accuracy of the translated questions. The issues about translation will be discussed later again in Chapter 6 under the heading of 'limitations of the study.' Finally, it is important to highlight here that all interview were digitally recorded.

3.2 Ethical considerations

In collecting the data, I drew on the 'Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research', by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004) and followed all the necessary ethical procedures stated in the Open University Code of Practice. An official approval was obtained from the Open University Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee (Appendix 3). I then submitted my translated version of the research proposal along with the questionnaire and sample interview questions to the Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education, the Directorate of Secondary Education to be able to conduct the study there. Once permission was granted (Appendix 4), I put my questionnaire online. In the survey tool I used in this study, Survey Monkey, there is no option to append an information sheet for the study and the consent form. Therefore, I used the first page of the survey to give all the relevant information and to obtain respondents' informed consents (Appendix 5 and 6). The information covered the purpose of the study, the methods of collecting data, the time commitment expected from participants and opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time before the data anonymisation process. The participants were also informed that their participation in this study was strictly voluntary and that any information obtained in connection with this study and that could identify them, would remain confidential and would be disclosed only with their permission. My name and contact details were given at the end. In order to make their

responses anonymous, I switched the option in Survey Monkey to collect computer IP addresses to ‘No’ (Appendix 7). The items in my paper-based consent form were presented on the same page. All questions in the survey required responses. However, I then thought it was ethically unacceptable to compel people to answer all the questions. Hence, I changed the settings and no questions other than relating to consent required responses.

3.3 Data Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately. In analysing the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire, I used the following steps suggested by Creswell and Clark (2007): preparing the data for analysis, exploring and then analysing the data. For the purposes of preparing the data for analysis, I scored the data by assigning numeric values to each response (Gender: Male=1, Female=2 for example). I then entered the data into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences 19.0 version). The second step entailed visually inspecting the data and conducting a descriptive analysis to determine general trends in the data (Creswell and Clark, 2007). Finally, percentage and frequency values of each question were calculated for the purposes of analysing the data. In order to examine the qualitative data and to put it together into meaningful interpretations, I used content analysis which can defined as a process by which the many words of texts are classified into much fewer categories in aim to reduce the material (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The following figure illustrates the steps I used for analysing qualitative data.

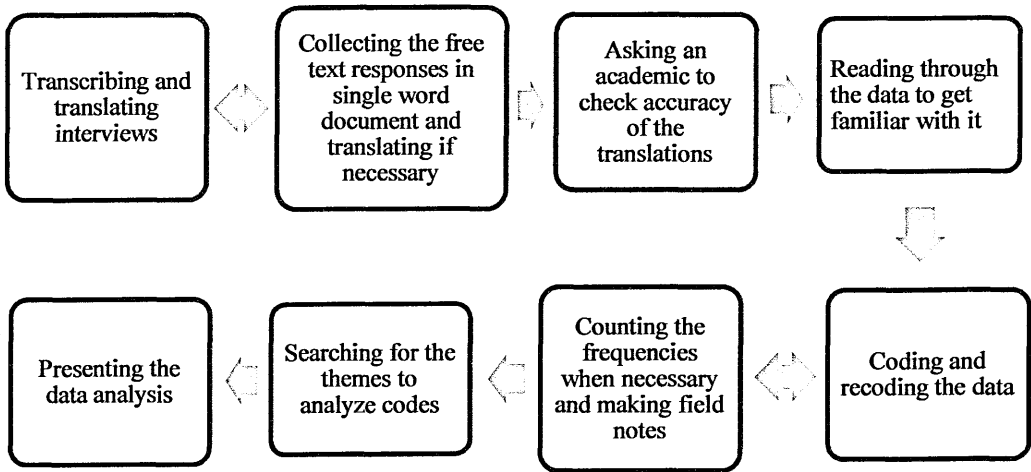


Figure 1: The procedure for analysing the qualitative data

As the figure shows, I first transcribed and translated the interviews. The accuracy of translation was checked. I then collected all the comments made by English teachers to the

third and fourth sections of the questionnaire in a single document. The next step I took was to read and re-read through the data. Building familiarity with the data helped me when coding it. The coding process is the core feature of qualitative data analysis (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). I began this process by dividing each response to the interview questions and questionnaire comments into small units (e.g. phrases). In the mean time I wrote-up very brief notes to record my initial thoughts. I was then able to search and identify the themes. Finally, I used quotes and tables to represent the analysed data. My experiences as an English learner and a teacher trainee in Turkey gave me advantages throughout the analysis of the qualitative data.

CHAPTER 4

COLLECTING AND ANALYSING DATA: INITIAL FINDINGS

This chapter begins by discussing and describing the data collection procedure (4.1). It then introduces the research participants (4.2) and lays out the initial findings. The findings are discussed under these categories: teachers' overall views on learner autonomy (4.3), the aspects of language learning most suited to the fostering of learner autonomy (4.4), perceived challenges in fostering learner autonomy (4.5), and views on the probable link between learner autonomy and language proficiency (4.6).

4.1 Data collection procedures

The online survey was accessible to the respondents for over a month between 1st of April and 6th of May. I posted the survey link three times on a social media group called 'English Language Teachers (ELT) Turkey, Facebook and asked those working with 9th or/and 10th Grades in Anatolian High Schools to participate. Additionally, potential respondents who were personal acquaintances were sent an e-mail that included a link to the online survey questionnaire. They were also requested to invite their own colleagues to participate. The total number of responses collected was 43; 3 of them which were incomplete were discarded. In the next stage of the study I conducted follow-up interviews with those who volunteered and wrote their names at the bottom of the questionnaire. Among 40 questionnaire respondents, 17 agreed to participate further. Due to time constraints, three interviews were conducted out of the four that were initially planned. The participant selection criteria were teachers' years of experience (e.g. those with 14 years or less experience, trained after the 1997 curriculum reform; 15 years and more, trained before the reform) and strong stances taken for or against learner autonomy. The following table illustrates some demographic information about the interviewees including gender, years of experience, medium of communication in the class and teaching hours per week. For purposes of confidentiality, the interview informants are identified by pseudonyms (Table 2):

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Years of experience</i>	<i>Medium of communication in the class</i>	<i>Teaching hours per week</i>
IA	Female	9	Turkish	20
IB	Female	6	Turkish/English	21
IC	Male	32	English	29

Table 2: Demographic background of interview informants

Prior to interviews, the informed consent of the participants was secured and all agreed that the interview could be recorded. The interviews were conducted in locations suggested by the interviewees: one in a local cafeteria, one in a restaurant and the third one in a school meeting room. As the rapport was already built prior to the interviews through e-mails and on the phone, I started each interview by outlining the purpose of the interview and its intended structure. During my first interview, I intended to take some notes, however it hindered me from keeping continuous eye-contact with my interviewee. Hence, I spent 10 to 15 minutes after each interview to make some notes about the whole interview process including the setting in which it was conducted. This helped me later while analysing the qualitative data. A challenge I had to face during interviews was to steer the interview when an interviewee entered into digressions which I did not feel relevant to my purpose. It seemed to work however to politely tell the interviewee that towards the end of the interview s/he would be asked to elaborate her thoughts on these issues. Each interview lasted 30 to 40 minutes. Interviews were transcribed in question/answer format as soon afterwards as possible. In order to check content validity, I emailed my first interviewee her interview transcript. Unfortunately it has not been possible to follow the same procedure with the rest of the interviewees due to time constraints. For research purposes, each transcript was translated. To ensure the accuracy of my translation, the same bilingual academic who looked at the sample interview questions checked the translated documents.

4.2 Analysis of demographic data about the research participants

The participants in this study were 40 non-native English teachers working with 9th and/or 10th Graders in Anatolian High Schools in various cities in Turkey. The teaching experience of participants (Table 3), their class contact hours (Table 4) and average class size (Table 5) are illustrated as follows:

	<i>Frequencies</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
0-4 years	1	2.5%
5-9 years	14	35%
10-14years	13	32.5%
15-19 years	4	10%
20-24 years	3	7.5%
25+	5	12.5%
Total	40	100 %

Table 3 Teaching experience of the questionnaire respondents

The table above reflects the participants’ range of teaching experience. The majority have between 5-9 and 10-14 years. The fact that most of the participants have been teaching

English for less than 14 years and so presumably were trained after the 1995 curriculum reform has significant implications for this study as will be discussed in Chapter 5. Table 4 below shows the hours taught by participants, with a majority teaching 20 to 29 hours per week; and Table 5 presents the average number of students in the classes with 25 to 29 stated as the most common average number by 47.5% of the teachers in the study:

Table 4: Hours of class taught per week

Teaching hours per week	Percentages
1-9	2.5%
10-19	7.5%
20-29	77.5%
30-39	12.5%
Total	100%

Table 5: The average class size

Average number of students	Percentages
15-19	15%
20-24	15%
25-29	47.5%
30-34	20%
39-39	2.5%
Total	100%

4.3 Teachers' overall views on learner autonomy

The third section of the questionnaire included thirteen different items referring to different aspects of language learning in a classroom environment ; *course objectives, course content, course materials, course time-place and pace, methodology, learning tasks, classroom management, record keeping, homework tasks, teaching focus, formulating own explanation, exploring own learning styles and processes, and self-assessment*. In this section, each aspect had various sub-items and respondents were asked to indicate their views on the suitability of each aspect for practising learner autonomy, using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from ‘0 (not at all)’ to 1 (little)’, ‘2 (partly)’, ‘3 (much)’ and ‘4 (very much)’ for each item. In the interpretation of the responses which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, Camilleri’s (1999) division was used: ‘not at all’ and ‘little’ were accepted as an expression of resistance to learner autonomy. ‘Partly’ was interpreted as willingness for collaboration and negotiation between teacher and learner. ‘Much’ and ‘very much’ on the other hand were interpreted as an expression of strong support for learner autonomy. The following table illustrates the participant teachers’ overall perceptions of learner autonomy:

Resistance to learner autonomy				Willingness for collaboration and negotiation		Strong support for learner autonon				Total			
Not at all		Little		Partly		Much		Very much					
n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
2	5	2	5	13	32.5	15	37.5	8	20	40	100		
Total				Total		Total				40	100		
n		%		n		%		n				%	
4		10		13		32.5		23				57.5	

Table 6: Distribution of overall perceptions on learner autonomy

As can be seen from the table, 57.5 % of the English teachers under study expressed strong support for learner autonomy while 32.5% were in favour of collaboration and negotiation between teacher and learner. Only 10% seem to show resistance to learner autonomy. Some of the participant teachers expressed their positive and negative stances through making general comments at the bottom of the section:

- Theory is always so far from reality, or I am too old in the teaching profession.
- I am really concerned with lack of autonomy in my students. They feel threatened when they are asked to take some responsibility for their learning. Not only teachers but also students have to be willing to negotiate [*sic*].
- Autonomous learners are motivated learners. They can continue learning English outside of the classroom. This is how they will become good language learners [*sic*].
- Learners have to take responsibility for their own learning. They should explore the best learning strategies for themselves. I cannot load knowledge like a funnel.

Further insights into participant teachers’ perceptions of learner autonomy emerged from the interviews. In response to interview questions the following themes and codes were identified:

<i>Learner autonomy</i>		
<i>Defined by the teacher as:</i>	<i>Positive views:</i>	<i>Negative views:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taking charge of one's own learning with the help of teacher (IA) -willingness to take responsibility and make decisions in the classroom (IB) -independent learning (IC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - necessary (IA, IB) - increases motivation (IA, IB) -maximizes success (IA,IB) -boost self-confidence (IB, IC) and help develop critical thinking skills (IB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -unnecessary in the classroom(IC) -neglects the importance of collaboration and interaction (IC) - theoretically ideal, but its practice can be unfeasible: hindrances in application (IA, IB, IC)

Table 7: Themes and codes emerged from the interview transcripts

For IA, the first of the interview informants, learner autonomy involves both individual and social dimensions: ‘it reminds me of individuality, selfhood of the student. It reminds me of a student taking charge, being in control. Teachers should act as a guide, and when necessary should support the student. Teacher and student will complement each other.’ IA thinks development of learner autonomy contributes to motivation and success. IB who defines autonomy in terms of willingness to take responsibility for one’s own learning stresses that learner autonomy contributes to the development of self-confidence and critical thinking skills. IC on the other hand argues that learner autonomy is concerned with independent learning; he further expresses the following: ‘one cannot learn a language on one’s own without interaction and collaborating with others.’ Qualitative data obtained through questionnaires and interviews reveals that most of the teachers value autonomy; however there are some constraints on their scope for developing autonomy which will be discussed later.

4.4 The aspects of language learning most suited to the fostering of learner autonomy

In order to find out the aspects of language learning most suited to the fostering of learner autonomy from the perspective of the English teachers under study, the frequency of responses to each item on the third section of the questionnaire was analysed. The following table presents the most positive replies to the sub-items:

<i>How much should the learner be involved in:</i>	<i>'much'</i>		<i>'very much'</i>		<i>Cumulative percentage</i>	<i>Rank order</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>		
11. finding own explanations to classroom tasks	12	30%	25	62.5%	92.5%	1
12. exploring learning styles and procedures	9	22.5%	25	62.5%	85%	2
13a. assessing oneself weekly	10	25%	21	52.5%	77.5%	3
13b. assessing oneself monthly	17	42.5%	11	27.5%	70%	4
2a. in deciding the course topic	17	42.5	8	20%	62.5%	5
1a. short-term objectives	17	42.5%	7	17.5%	60%	6
3b. selecting audio-visual materials	13	32.5%	11	27.5%	60%	6
10b. selecting what is to be learned from audio-visual materials	14	35%	8	20%	55%	7

Table 8: Aspects of language learning felt to be more suited for fostering learner autonomy by the participants

The results for the sub-items indicate that 92.5 percent of the English teachers who participated in this study were in favour of encouraging learners to find their own explanations to classroom tasks. IA elaborated further on this aspect: 'helping students formulate their own explanations to the tasks can be a very important strategy to improve their understanding of the tasks.' Exploring learning styles and processes was another aspect of language learning addressed in this study. The findings show that 85% of the participants supported encouraging learners to find their own learning styles and procedures. IB was one of those teachers. However, she stated later that due to several constraining factors such as scarcity of time and crowded classroom it was very difficult to put it in practice. The following comment made by a questionnaire respondent reports a more positive attitude: 'Each student has a different way of learning. A teacher may not be aware of a single person's qualities in depth; however she can train learners to explore their own study skills.' The percentages of supportive responses in relation to learner encouragement for weekly and monthly assessment were 77.5% and 70% respectively. One of the questionnaire respondents commented on this aspect: 'As a teacher I believe self-assessment is a vital part of the learning process. We must encourage the use of the European Language Portfolio (ELP).' Despite their supportive responses to the question with regard to self-assessment in the survey, none of the interview informants made use of

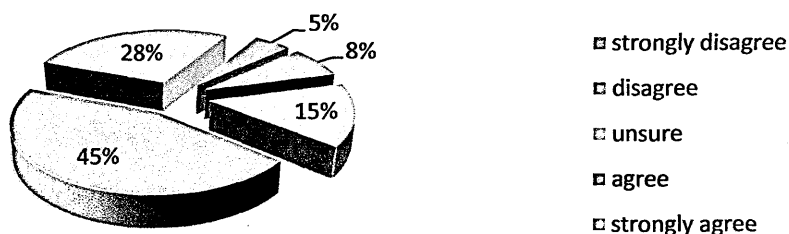
self-assessment tools or strategies, including the ELP. Many hindrances in practice were declared (see Section 4.5).

Positive attitudes were found in relation to involving students in deciding the course topic (62.5%) and in establishing short-term objectives (60%). One of the questionnaire respondents said the following with regard to the choice of topics: ‘Any topic is of use to the teaching of English language, therefore I let my students choose the topics. Most of the time they come up with very original ideas and as they were involved in the decision-making process, they take the course over. I often feel amazed how this little trick increases their participation.’ 60% and 55% of the questionnaire respondents expressed positive views on allowing learners to select audio-visual materials and decide what is to be learnt from them respectively. The following extract belongs to one of the questionnaire respondents: ‘I usually ask my students to prepare very short presentations about their most favourite English songs or short films. We then use the most appropriate ones for speaking and listening activities. It helps motivate all my students.’ While IB and IC had positive views on these aspects, IA doubted the capacity of students to make meaningful decisions: ‘My students tend to use audio-visual materials only for entertainment, even in the classroom. Learning from these materials is usually their least concern.’

4.5 Teachers’ views on the probable link between learner autonomy and second language proficiency

The first question of section 4 in the questionnaire asked teachers the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: Learner autonomy results in higher levels of second language proficiency. The aim was to elicit teachers’ views on the probable link between learner autonomy and language proficiency. The following figure presents the results of frequency analysis:

Figure 1: Teachers’ views on the extent to which learner autonomy results in higher language proficiency



According to the findings illustrated above, 28% of the participants strongly agree with the statement while 5% strongly disagree. None of the participants who expressed strong disagreement explain the reason why they did so. The following comment was made by a teacher with a strong positive view: ‘There is a close relationship between the levels of motivation and language proficiency. Giving learners more freedom and involving them in decision-making processes increases their motivation. Motivated learners are always the ones with higher language proficiencies.’ 45% on the other hand stated that they agreed with the statement in the questionnaire: ‘Learner autonomy brings voluntary, motivated, self-aware and self-confident students into my mind and they are the kind of students I think would learn better.’ 7% on the other hand expressed disagreement while 15% were unsure that learner autonomy maximizes the level of language proficiency. Explanations were not offered. All the interviewees expressed positive views about the statement. IC for example said that autonomous learners are more likely to be better language learners. They are aware of their own learning process, able to make decisions and choose the best materials or learning strategies for themselves. They make use of all the available resources for their learning outside of the classroom, such as watching English movies, reading English books, using the internet efficiently.’

4.6 Challenges to the fostering of learner autonomy in Anatolian High schools at Grades 9 and/or 10 in Turkey

Qualitative data obtained from free-text responses and interviews were highly valuable in finding out challenges to the fostering of learner autonomy. The following themes were identified while analysing free-text responses and interview transcripts together:

Student- related constraints	Institutional constraints	Socio-cultural constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -lack of motivation -unwilling to take responsibility - inability in using resources available for their learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Large classes -Scarcity of time -Necessity to fulfil all the curricular demands and tests -little freedom given to the teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Conception of teacher as a transmitter of knowledge - Parent attitudes

Table 9: Challenges to the fostering of learner autonomy

An important note that needs to be made here is that teachers who are assigned the duty of fostering learner autonomy may negatively influence the process (Paiva, 2005), in other

words, they themselves may hinder the fostering of learner autonomy. However, the present study whose participants are teachers themselves was not able to identify any constraint directly related to the teachers.

4.6.1 Student-related constraints

Students' lack of motivation and unwillingness to take responsibility for their own learning were among the concerns reported by the majority of questionnaire respondents who entered free text responses: 'Many students can neither act as a single person, nor act within a group. I mean many of them are unwilling to learn and to learn how to learn.' The interview respondent IB reported the following: 'Students are so unwilling to do any further work for their own progress. Asking them to fill in ELP, for example will result in disappointment.' Some of the teachers blamed their students for lacking ability in using resources available for their own learning. The following extract is taken from the interview carried out with IB: 'English is a global language and thanks to recent technological developments it is available for learners in any part of their lives. My students know these English words in their computer games very well; instructions, exit, play, for example. However, they have no intention of making use of online or electronic resources for real learning. Google translate seems to work for them.'

4.6.2 Institutional constraints

Large classes, scarcity of time and the pressure on teachers to fulfil all the curricular demands and tests, and abolition of preparatory classes in their contexts were among the institutional constraints reported by some of the participants. One of the questionnaire respondents reported for example: 'Classes are too large and the time given for teaching English is not enough. When I intent to give some freedom to my students or encourage them to participate in decision-making processes of the course within these barriers, we usually end up in chaos. Once things go wrong, there is no time to make them right. [*sic*]' The scarcity of time was expressed by IC, too: 'we used to have more contact hours with our students before the preparatory classes were abolished, now there is not much time to do anything but teaching all the curricular topics one by one.' IA on the other hand expressed her views on same issue: 'The number of lessons is such a constraining factor. I want to try something new with my students but I have got no time. On the other hand, all the other teachers teach alongside the curriculum and I am left behind. There is an English examination in which all those from the same grade are assessed together. This is another concern. When I try something new and ignore the curriculum, this time my students start

putting pressure on me to teach the rest of the things they are going to be asked in the exam.’

What IB said about curricular demands is worth highlighting here: ‘MONE tells us that we do not have to teach everything in the curriculum. However, at the end of the school year, we are required to report it to them if we were able to teach all the topics in the curriculum. Say I was not able to teach all the things then I face an interrogation over failure to be in tune with the curriculum. MONE pretends to be flexible but indeed it is not. I do try my best to foster learner autonomy, but how can I give freedom to the students if I do not have any myself.’

Some teachers expressed their concerns over the limited freedom given to them on making decisions related to the course. A questionnaire respondent made the following comment: ‘our education system is so called learner-centred, but in truth neither learners nor teachers are anywhere close to the centre. We as teachers do not have much freedom. Everything is determined by the Ministry of Education. All we do is to follow the national curriculum and use the books produced and distributed by the ministry. Any attempt to foster learner autonomy is nothing more than flogging a dead horse. We are much too restricted.’ IA seems to agree with this comment: I am an English teacher but I am not given any freedom even on the choice of textbooks or how to teach. This is the reason why, I think, many teachers fail in involving students into the decisions on many aspects of language learning in the class. Surrounded with many constraints, we are expected to wave our wands, cast our spells and make students speak perfect English.’ The following extract is taken from the interview with IB in response to an interview question (Is there any areas you are given flexibility to choose?) emerged from a free text response she entered ‘I cannot choose textbooks but I am free to choose teaching materials. I have to find resources, prepare materials. This is what MONE tells me. This is however an extra duty placed on my shoulders. As a teacher I prepare the materials, I prepare exam questions, I am responsible for assessments, and I have to give special attention to each student’s needs and so on. I think teachers are expected to do too many things at a time in this country.’

4.6.3 Socio-cultural constraints

The first statement of the fourth section in the questionnaire was designed to find out whether learner autonomy presents particular challenges for Turkish culture:

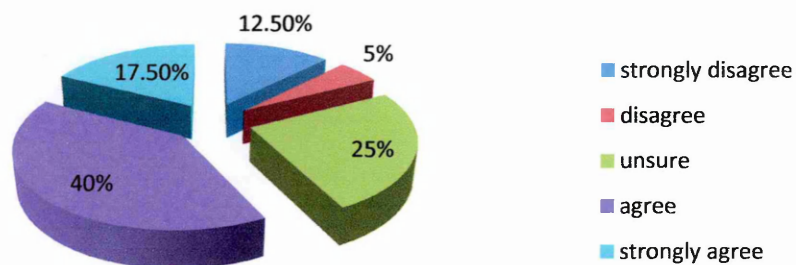


Figure 2: Teachers' views on Turkish culture as a barrier to the fostering of learner autonomy

The findings show that while 17.5% strongly agree that culture is a hindrance to the fostering of learner autonomy, 12.5% strongly disagree with the statement. 40% on the other hand agreed less strongly while 25% stated that they were not sure if Turkish culture was a barrier to the fostering of learner autonomy. Finally, only 5% disagreed less strongly with the statement. The following comment belongs to IA who expressed her disagreement strongly in the questionnaire: 'I think human nature is universal so it doesn't change from one culture to another. Basically every human has the same instincts. What I mean is that by giving learners (controlled and targeted) freedom we can make them more responsible and get them to take more part in the learning process as well as classroom activities. I don't believe that this human behaviour changes depending on culture because it is natural and innate.' During interview, she further stated: 'I really don't think it is anything to do with the Turkish culture. MONE puts the curriculum together, decides on how many times a week English is going to be taught and so on. Has the teacher got any right to say a word against this? Has the student got anything? This is really nothing to do with the culture. The education system is the barrier not the culture.'

Qualitative data were very helpful in explaining the reasons why the majority of teachers thought learner autonomy presented particular challenges for Turkish culture. These were; the conception of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge; family attitudes; and students' attitudes towards English. This is what was expressed by a questionnaire respondent: 'Any attempt I make to foster learner autonomy in my classes is challenged by the fact that students expect me to teach traditionally but not to do anything else. Even the least motivated student sends me the message of 'do something, teach me'. In a similar line, the following was expressed by IC: 'Students expect teachers to teach, but they do not want to make anything for their own learning. Interestingly, most of the teachers already feel comfortable with traditional grammar-focused teaching methods.'

Another cultural factor highlighted by the participants was family attitudes. A questionnaire respondent commented for example: 'Parents decide on behalf of their child and when the child comes to the age when he is asked to make certain decisions, s/he often feels confused. It is because s/he was not given any opportunity so far to develop any decision-making skills. A very simple example: How hard I tried does not matter, some students did not even remember to bring their student's book and work books into the class during the whole term. Until high school, it is because; their school bags were prepared by their mothers. They did not take responsibility of doing even these little things for their own learning.' IB expressed a similar thought during the interview: 'we do not raise our children as autonomous individuals but we expect them to be autonomous learners. That is impossible because 'autonomy' is a result rather than a method or techniques used in education.'

The participants further expressed the view that students' conception of English was a hindrance to the fostering of learner autonomy. IA for example argued that students perceive English as nothing more than a school subject: 'students are not concerned with learning English. The only thing they want is to get high marks from the exams in any way. They do not want to put any effort into learning English. As English teachers, our main concern is to change this attitude first. We can then start teaching English.' A questionnaire respondent expressed similar thoughts: 'Most of the students consider Anatolian High Schools as a gate that opens to the universities. Their major concern is to be successful in the university entrance exam they are going to take at the end of Grade 12. English assessment is not a part of this exam, for that reason students give priority to the other subjects starting from 9th Grade, not to English.'

To conclude, this chapter discussed and described the data collection procedure and then introduced the research participants. The findings showed that the participant teachers generally had supportive views about the fostering of learner autonomy. Moreover they felt that some aspects of language learning such as finding explanations or self-assessment are more suited to the exercise of autonomy than others in their contexts. Furthermore, the findings showed that the majority of teachers believed that there is a positive link between learner autonomy and the level of target language proficiency. Finally, the study laid out findings about the factors that were likely to impede the fostering of learner autonomy. In the chapter that follows, interpretation of these findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 5

INTERPRETING THE DATA

In the previous chapter, findings of the study were presented. In this chapter an interpretation of these findings will be provided in the light of relevant literature. The chapter follows the same order in which the findings were reported.

5.1. Research questions 1: What are the views of a sample of English teachers working with 9th and/or 10th Graders in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey on the concept of learner autonomy?

The findings of this study showed that the majority of those surveyed had supportive views about learner autonomy. This can be interpreted as an expression of willingness to change practice in some areas of their teaching in the direction of learner autonomy in their contexts (Camilleri, 1999). There are two possible explanations for teachers' positive disposition towards learner autonomy. First, the qualitative findings obtained from free-text responses and interviews suggested that teachers very often seemed to associate the development of learner autonomy with the improvement of motivation and self-confidence. What IB said can be given as an example here: 'An autonomous learner is able to express himself/herself better than others in the classroom and happy to be involved in classroom decisions, because they are confident and motivated.' This finding runs parallel to the idea that autonomy is a desirable notion as it helps to increase learners' motivation levels (Little, 1991) and their self-esteem (Dam, 1995). However, it is important to note that the link especially between motivation and learner autonomy needs to be treated with great caution, as was discussed in the literature review. The debate on whether learner autonomy maximises one's motivation for learning (Little, 1991) or motivation is the prerequisite for the development of learner autonomy (Littlewood, 1996) still continues. Secondly, the positive views found in the study may be related to the length of teaching experience possessed by research participants. As stated in Chapter 4, the participants' teaching experience ranged in the main from 5 to 14 years. This implies that majority of them were trained after the implementation of curriculum reform in teacher education between 1995 and 1999, which adopted a student-centred approach to student learning. However, one may still treat this explanation with caution due to small sample size and more importantly due to the unequal distribution of teaching experience among the participants.

The overall positive findings obtained in this study are similar to the views found by Sabanci (2007), Simon and Borg (2011), and Yildirim (2005) which have been covered in the literature review. Sabanci for example who undertook her research in Turkey found positive attitudes towards learner autonomy and further stated that her participants believed learner autonomy could increase students' interest, self-confidence and success, as well as contributing to their psychological development. Similarly, Camilleri (1999) reported the positive views teachers had with regard to the concept and concluded that teachers' attitudes had a crucial role in the successful implementation of learner autonomy. Consequently, the findings about teachers' views on learner autonomy seem to be quite encouraging. However, a final comment that needs to be made on this section is that the positive views expressed should not be considered as an indication of teachers' full understanding of learner autonomy and the extent to which they foster learner autonomy, as will become clearer in the next sections.

5.2. Research Question 2: Which aspects of language learning do these teachers feel are most suited to the fostering of learner autonomy?

The literature suggests that the first step towards fostering learner autonomy in a formal educational context is to make learners recognize that they are responsible for their own learning and to make them exercise that responsibility by being fully involved in all aspects of the learning process (Little, 2003). This study looked at teachers' views on 13 different items and various sub-areas referring to different aspects of language learning in a classroom environment. The view which informed this study was that some of these aspects of language learning could be considered as more suitable than others by individual teachers in different contexts (Camilleri, 1999). Hence, the second research question in this study was concerned with identifying which aspects the participants feel most suited in the context of Anatolian High Schools. The findings indicated that 8 (sub-) aspects of language learning were felt to be most suited to the exercise of autonomy by pupils. These were: encouraging learners to find own explanations of classrooms tasks, encouraging them to explore learning styles and procedures, assessing one's progress weekly, assessing one's progress monthly, deciding the course topic, establishing short-term objectives and selecting audio-visual resources, respectively. These findings to a great extent are consistent with those of Sabanci (2007) who found that learners were most capable of being autonomous in formulating their own explanations, finding their own strategies, self-assessment and deciding on an appropriate methodology for the lesson. The areas which attracted the strongest support in Camilleri's study is not very different from what has been found in this study: selecting realia, deciding on the position of desks, deciding on the

seating of students, deciding on the record keeping of work done, encouraging learners to find their explanations to classroom tasks, encouraging them to explore learning styles and procedures, and finally encouraging learners to assess themselves on weekly and monthly basis.

The free-text response box incorporated into the third section of the questionnaire and interviews conducted with three questionnaire respondents were helpful in explaining why these aspects were found most suited to the exercise of autonomy. A possible explanation is that participants were more likely to be willing to involve their students in decisions on the condition that their own autonomy was not restricted. An example of this can be that teachers had no freedom over the choice of textbooks but it was their task to choose and prepare the teaching materials they wanted to use in their classes, as indicated by IB. This could explain why the participant teachers were more supportive about involving their students in selecting audio-visual materials: 'I usually ask my students to prepare very short presentations about their most favourite English songs or short films' (a free text response). The more room they have themselves for autonomy the more they are likely to foster it in their classroom (Esch, 2009). What needs to be noted here however is that the implementation of learner autonomy is subject to several constraints in an institutional setting (Lamb, 2006; Trebbi, 2008). This study revealed many of these constraining factors in the context of the participants. These factors will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. What I would like to underline here is firstly the participant teachers' awareness of the factors that may impede their practice and secondly them being realistic about what they could do for the fostering of learner autonomy instead of pretending to the researcher that they offered choice to the students when they did not. Therefore, the findings can be considered encouraging as Lamb (2006) states that being honest about the constraints on choice which may come from the limitations of the learning environment and helping learners find ways about these constraints are the factors involved in the process of helping students become autonomous.

5.3. Research Question 3: What do the participant teachers perceive as challenges in fostering learner autonomy in their particular contexts?

There are always constraints within formal education contexts when fostering learner autonomy (Zembylas and Lamb, 2008). Drawing on this view, the third research question in this study was concerned with exploring the challenges in fostering learner autonomy in the contexts in which the participants were working. Several challenges were reported by the teachers, which were then divided into three categories. These were; student-related,

institutional and socio-cultural constraints. Despite being presented in three categories it is important to state that all these challenges seem interrelated, as will come clearer during the discussion.

5.3.1 Interpretation of the student-related constraints identified in the study

Lack of motivation, unwillingness to take responsibility and inability to use the resources available for their learning were among the factors pertaining to the students by the participant teachers in this study. It was clear from what they said that the lack of motivation, which was found as a constraining factor by Borg and Al-busaidi (2011) as well, was the consequence of unwillingness to take responsibility. The literature review suggested that a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning was a pre-requisite for the development of learner autonomy (Sinclair, 2000). This may imply that a teacher cannot foster autonomy unless the learner in question is willing to take responsibility. The probability that students might rarely have had opportunities to practice learner autonomy in their previous school contexts could explain why they were unwilling to take responsibility. IA for example emphasised the following many times during the interview: ‘We do not introduce autonomous learning activities and environments to students in primary and elementary schools; but expect them to act autonomously when they enter high schools.’ A very important point that needs to be highlighted with regard to this interpretation is that this study did not investigate learners’ views or their previous learning experiences. The interpretation is based on the qualitative data obtained from their teachers. A final constraint reported as student-related was their inability to use resources for their own learning. Bearing in mind that in a context like Turkey, English is taught as a foreign language and opportunities to use the language are limited outside of the classroom; the ability to choose and use appropriate resources was a matter of concern among the teachers. The reasons for this inability were again linked to lack of motivation and unwillingness to develop autonomous behaviours.

5.3.2 Interpretation of the institutional constraints identified in the study

A number of institutional constraints were identified in the study. These were large classes, scarcity of time, pressure to fulfil the curricular demands and tests and finally little freedom given to the teachers. Similar institutional challenges were found in Borg and Al Busaidi (2011)’s, Sabanci’s (2007) and Camilleri’s (1999) projects. Sabanci for example stated concerns over curriculum as one of the most important factors constraining autonomous learning in Turkey. The final institutional constraint identified in this study is worth

addressing further; this is the limited freedom given to the teachers within the education system. As highlighted previously, it is important to give more scope to teachers for flexibility and freedom of choice. Failure to do so results in resistance to learner autonomy (Camilleri, 1999). Qualitative data in this study indicated that, according to some teachers, the education system in the country seemed to preclude sufficient flexibility on the part of the teacher, thus making it difficult to foster learner autonomy in the classroom. IA for example stated that she was not given any freedom even on the choice of textbooks or how to teach. For her, this was the reasons why many teachers might fail in involving students into decisions. The overview of the ELT in the beginning of Chapter 2 provided similar insights. All major decisions are for example made by the Ministry of National Education. This implied the reality that teachers themselves were not involved in any phase of decision-making process. In addition, teachers were subject to a rigid and prescribed curriculum which was followed nationwide. Teachers were monitored throughout the year by MONE's supervisors and any failure to cover the whole syllabus would cause them problems.

5.3.3 Interpretation of socio-cultural challenges identified in the study

Socio-cultural challenges were also identified. The findings indicated that the conception of the teacher as a transmitter of knowledge as well as parents' attitudes were antithetical to the fostering of learner autonomy. During interviews, it was especially highlighted that most of the students favoured traditional style of teaching in which teachers acted as transmitters of knowledge who had all the responsibility for learning and students as passive recipients. What IC had said is worth reproducing here: 'Students expect teachers to teach, but they do not want to make anything for their own learning. Interestingly, most of the teachers already feel comfortable with traditional grammar-focused teaching methods.' Teachers seemed to give an impression that they were willing to change their practice should the students and parents change their expectations from the teacher. However, a closer look at the data suggested that teachers themselves seemed to fear losing control in the classroom and the learning environment turning into chaos: 'When I intent to give some freedom to my students or encourage them to participate in decision-making processes of the course within these barriers, we usually end up in chaos. Once things go wrong, there is no time to make them right' (a free text response by a questionnaire respondent). The literature review suggested that in the process of autonomous learning views about teacher and learner roles need to be revised. Teachers needed not only to do something about changing their authoritative views but also about helping their students

become aware of their roles. However, this seems to be not going to solve the problem of parents' attitudes. Teachers seemed to be concerned about even small amounts of freedom given to the students by their parents. Raising parents' awareness about the learning process seems to be very necessary and significant.

5.4 Research question 4: To what extent do these teachers believe that there is a link between learner autonomy and levels of second language proficiency?

The final task of this study was concerned with the questions of whether according to participants; there was any link between learner autonomy and levels of second language proficiency. The findings indicated that majority of them believed they correlate positively. In other words, according to teachers learner autonomy results in higher degrees of second language proficiency. This is in agreement with the positive teacher views Simon and Borg (2012) found in their study conducted in a non-western country, Oman. The authors suggested the following relationships based on their participants' responses in order to explain the logic behind the positive disposition: Autonomous learners are more motivated, committed, happier, benefit from learning opportunities outside the classroom and take more risks. Similar suggestions were made by the participants of this study: Autonomous learners are motivated, voluntary, self-aware, self-confident, and able to make right decisions, choose the best materials and learning strategies, and make use of all available learning resources. These views support the characteristics of autonomous learners identified by Dam (1995), which were introduced in the literature review.

Literature review presented in Chapter 2 suggested that there is a lack of empirical evidence documenting the relationship between learner autonomy and second language proficiency. Bearing in mind that development of learner autonomy is not a single act on the part of the teacher but a complex never-ending process (Esch, 2009) which requires constant effort (Dam, 1995), finding an answer to this question may take some time. Nevertheless, the concept of learner autonomy is seen as an equivalent of effective learning (e.g. Benson, 2001; Little, 1991; Sabanci, 2007; Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2011) and this can explain why the majority of participants in the study expressed strong views with regard to the link between learner autonomy and second language proficiency.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents a brief summary of the study and goes on to discuss limitation of the study. It then suggests pedagogical implications.

6.1 Summary of the study

The aim of this study was to investigate 9th and 10th Graders' English teachers' views on learner autonomy in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey, the most common high school type in the country. Four research questions were formulated in order to investigate:

- Overall views on learner autonomy,
- The most suited areas to the fostering of learner autonomy,
- Challenges to its development and,
- Whether, according to teachers, there is a link between learner autonomy and foreign language proficiency.

The data was collected through an online survey questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. 40 English teachers completed the survey questionnaire. Among them, 3 were chosen for the interview study. The findings indicated that the majority of teachers under investigation had positive views on the concept. Some areas of teaching and learning they found more suited to the fostering of learner autonomy in their classrooms. These were; encouraging learners to find own explanations of classrooms tasks, encouraging them to explore learning styles and procedures, assessing one's progress weekly, assessing one's progress monthly, deciding the course topic, establishing short-term objectives and selecting audio-visual resources, respectively. Additionally, learner-related, institutional and socio-cultural challenges were reported. Finally the study revealed that the majority thought learner autonomy resulted in higher degrees of foreign language proficiency.

6.2 Limitations of the study

This study has a number of limitations that require caution while interpreting the findings. The most severe limitation is that the study utilised a questionnaire to survey teachers' views on the concept of learner autonomy so as to obtain data from 40 English teachers. Small sample size means that findings drawn from the data obtained from these teachers may not be relevant to other English teachers in Turkey. Hence I avoided making strong claims about the generalisability of my quantitative findings to all English teachers

working in different parts of the country in 9th and 10th Grades. The second limitation of the study which is as important as the first one is derived from the research methods used in the study. That is, both questionnaires and interviews have their own limitations. As for the questionnaires, there is a possibility for example that individual teachers may have interpreted the questions differently and provided inaccurate information. Additionally, there is also an element of ambiguity in the data obtained from the third section of the questionnaire which referred to various aspects of language teaching and learning. To put it more clearly, it was not obvious whether the responses given to the items in this section were based on teachers' pedagogical beliefs or on their current classroom practice. Qualitative data obtained through interviews suggested that the former was more likely. As for the interviews, my role as a researcher might have affected the informants' responses. The third limitation of the study is that it relies very much on teachers' self reports. Should it have been possible to carry these out, classroom observations would have provided richer insights with regard to the fostering of learner autonomy, challenges faced in its application and more importantly the extent to which teachers' positive dispositions found in the study is reflected in their classroom practices. Finally it is important to state that translation can be recognized as one of the limitations of the study although considerable care was taken to ensure accuracy in this.

6.3 Implications of the study

Taken together, the findings of this study have two implications for ELT practice in Turkey with regard to the fostering of learner autonomy. First of all, there is a need for an in-service teacher training on the concept of learner autonomy. Despite the considerable emphasis on the concept throughout the curriculum, there has not been any training available for in-service teachers so far, as the answers to the 14th interview question revealed. Literature suggests that providing teachers with continuous support by encouraging them to participate in workshops, courses and seminars is very important (Dam, 2003). This can help maximise their understanding of the concept as well as their awareness of the ways to foster learner autonomy within the limitations of their contexts. Having full understanding however may not be enough on its own to bring the change into the classrooms. Schools and teachers should be given some flexibility for making their own choices by MONE, which is remarkably centralist. This may in return influence the extent to which teachers offer choice to their students and boost the opportunities to create autonomous learning environments. Finally, the study which looked at teachers' views on learner autonomy has further raised questions which have not been answered yet and are in

need of further research. There is for example a need to investigate (a) whether students' and institutions' views differ from teachers' positive disposition (b) whether students' and institutions' perceptions of difficulties in developing learner autonomy differ from those of teachers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Colleague,

This questionnaire is designed to explore 9th and 10th Grade English teachers' views about learner autonomy. There are **five** sections and it will take you 15-20 minutes to complete it. There is no correct or best response to the questions. Please answer them based on your thinking at this time. Your responses are of highest value to me and they will constitute the backbone of my research.

Thank you for your contribution in advance.

Section 1: Personal Information

Please tick ONE.

1. Years of experience as an English language teacher:

0-4 ☐ 5-9 ☐ 10-14 ☐ 15-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25+ ☐

2. Highest qualification:

Bachelor's ☐ Master's ☐

3. Gender:

Male ☐ Female ☐

Section 2: School Information

Please tick ONE

4. Type of setting your school is located at:

Rural ☐ Urban ☐

5. How many hours of class do you teach per week?

1-9 ☐ 10-19 ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐

6. What is the average number of students in your class?

15-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25-29 ☐ 30-34 ☐ 35-39 ☐ 40-44 ☐

Section 3: Learner Autonomy

Please circle the number of your choice
Key to answers:

0= Not at all	1= Little	2= Partly	3=Much	4= Very much
---------------	-----------	-----------	--------	--------------

8. How much should the learner be involved in establishing the **objectives** of a course of study?

8a short-term objectives	0	1	2	3	4
8b long-term objectives	0	1	2	3	4

9. How much should the learner be involved in **deciding the course content**?

9a in deciding topic	0	1	2	3	4
9b in deciding tasks	0	1	2	3	4

10. How much should the learner be involved in **selecting materials**?

10a. selecting textbooks	0	1	2	3	4
10b. selecting audio-visual aids	0	1	2	3	4
10c. selecting realia	0	1	2	3	4

11. How much should the learner be involved in **decisions on the time, place and pace of the lesson**?

11a time	0	1	2	3	4
11b place	0	1	2	3	4
11c pace	0	1	2	3	4

12. How much should the learner be involved in **decisions on the methodology of the lesson**?

12a. individual/pair/group work	0	1	2	3	4
12b. use of materials	0	1	2	3	4
12c. type of classroom activities	0	1	2	3	4
12d. type of homework activities	0	1	2	3	4

13. How much should the learner be involved in **decisions on the choice of learning tasks**?

0	1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---	---

14. How much should the learner be involved in **decisions on classroom management?**

14a. position of desks	0	1	2	3	4
14b. seating of students	0	1	2	3	4
14c. discipline matters	0	1	2	3	4

15. How much should the learner be involved in **decision about record-keeping?**

15a. of work done	0	1	2	3	4
15b. of marks gained	0	1	2	3	4
15c. attendance	0	1	2	3	4

16. How much should the learner be involved in **decisions on homework tasks?**

16a. quantity	0	1	2	3	4
16b. type	0	1	2	3	4
16c. frequency	0	1	2	3	4

17. How much should the learner be involved in decisions on what is to be learned from **materials** given by the teacher?

17a. texts	0	1	2	3	4
17b. audio-visual aids	0	1	2	3	4
17c. realia	0	1	2	3	4

18. How much should the learner be encouraged to find his or her own explanations to **classroom tasks?**

0	1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---	---

19. How much should the learner be encouraged to explore learning styles and processes that work for him- or herself?

0	1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---	---

20. How much should the learner be encouraged to **assess himself or herself**, rather than be tested?

20a. weekly	0	1	2	3	4
20b. monthly	0	1	2	3	4
20c. annually	0	1	2	3	4

General comments on Learner Autonomy (Write in Turkish if you prefer):

Section 4: Learner Autonomy, Language Proficiency and Feasibility

This section contains two open-ended questions.

21. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer and comment please.

Learner autonomy results in higher levels of second language proficiency.

Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Unsure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐

Please comment on why you feel the way you do about the statement above (Write in Turkish if you prefer):

22. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer and comment please.

Fostering learner autonomy presents particular challenges in Turkey because it is a Western cultural construct.

Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Unsure ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree ☐

Please comment on why you feel the way you do about the statement above. (Write in Turkish if you prefer):

Section 5: Further Participation

In the next stage of the study I would like to talk to individual teachers to learn more about their views on learner autonomy. Would you be interested in discussing this issue further with me?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered YES to the question, please write your name and email address here.

Name:

E-mail:

End of questionnaire!

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Betul Khalil

Research Student at the Open University

Email: betul.khalil@open.ac.uk

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does learner autonomy mean to you? (What does it mean to you for students to take control of their own learning?)

2. What are the characteristics of an autonomous learner for you?

(Further questions were asked based on the responses given in the questionnaire.)

3. Do you negotiate any aspects of the class with the students (objectives, activities, evaluation)?

4. Can you talk about the learning material and equipment students have available to study and learn English? Which ones do you use? (Who chooses/decides the learning material? Do you let your students participate in the selection of the learning material and equipment? *This question was asked if the issue was not discussed earlier*)

5. What do you do to foster learner autonomy in your classroom practices/ Do you foster learner autonomy? Do you find it difficult? Why?

6. Do you think it is feasible to foster learner autonomy in Turkey? Can you explain why do you think so?

7. How would you describe your own practice: teacher or student centred? Some argue that Turkish classrooms of English are still teacher-centred. Why do you think this is happening? (Which type of teacher-learner relationship do you think to be the most suitable to you?: Teacher knows better/learner knows better/ a compromised one)

(Further questions were asked based on their responses on the questionnaire items. An example:

8. In the questionnaire, you stated that development of learner autonomy doesn't result/ results in higher levels of language proficiency, can you please explain a bit further why you think so.

9. What should be done to be able to nurture more autonomous students? Or, do you think it is necessary?

10. Do you think it is your responsibility to nurture autonomous learners, as stated in the curriculum? Can you explain a bit further?

11. What do you think about the emphasis on learner autonomy in the curriculum?

12. What is your preferred medium of communication in the classroom? Are your students willing to speak English in the classroom?)
13. What do you know about European Language Portfolio? Have you ever used ELP or any other portfolio assessment? How did your students react?
14. Have you been to any in-service teacher training session designed to raise awareness about learner autonomy or ELP?
15. When was the first time you came across with this concept?

Appendix 3

Research Approval: The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee



The Open University

From Dr Duncan Banks
Chair, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee
Email duncan.banks@open.ac.uk¹¹¹
Extension 59198
To Betul Khalil, FELS (CREET)
Subject "Exploring 9th and 10th Grade English teachers' views on
learner autonomy in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey."
Ref HREC/2012/1351/Khalil/1
Red form
Submitted 14 December 2012
Date 18 December 2012

Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, is approved by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee by chair's action.

Please make sure that any question(s) relating to your application and approval are sent to Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk quoting the HREC reference number above. We will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible so that your research is not delayed in any way.

At the conclusion of your project, by the date that you stated in your application, the Committee would like to receive a summary report on the progress of this project, any ethical issues that have arisen and how they have been dealt with.

Regards,

Dr Duncan Banks
Chair OU HREC

¹¹¹ please note the change in email address

Appendix 4

Permission obtained from the Ministry of National Education



T.C.
MİLLÎ EĞİTİM BAKANLIĞI
Ortaöğretim Genel Müdürlüğü

Sayı : 84037561/44/104068
Konu : Anket Çalışması

13/02/2013

Sayın Betül KHALİL
Stuart Hall Building, Level 3
The Open University
Walton Hall, Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire UK MK7 6 AA

İngiltere Open Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi doktora öğrencisi Betül KHALİL, Anadolu Liselerinde görev yapan İngilizce Öğretmenlerine yönelik anket uygulamayı ilgi yazı ile talep etmiştir.

Betül KHALİL'in, Anadolu Liselerinde görev yapan İngilizce Öğretmenlerine yönelik 5 sayfa 26 sorudan oluşan anket çalışması ile 2 sayfa 18 sorudan oluşan nicel görüşme sorularının eğitim ve öğretim aksatılmadan, il/ilçe ve okul yönetimlerinde gerekli tedbirler alınıp gönüllülük esasına göre uygulanmasında bir sakınca görülmemiş olup sonuçlandırılmış çalışma tezinin bir örneğinin Genel Müdürlüğümüze gönderilmesi hususunda

Bilgilerinizi ve gereğini rica ederim.

Ercan TÜRK
Bakan a.
Genel Müdür

Güvenli Elektronik İmza
Aslı İla Ayarlar.

13/02/2013

13 Şubat 2013

Fevzi PARLAK
VHKİ

Bu belge, 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5 inci maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.
Evrak teyidi <http://evraksorgu.meb.gov.tr> adresinden febf-ac2b-3c3c-acf3-ee6c koda ile yapılabilir.

Atatürk Biv. 06648 Kızılay/ANKARA
Elektronik Ağ: www.egm.gov.tr
e-posta: mcevik@meb.gov.tr

Ayrıntılı bilgi için : Mine ÇEVİK
Tel : (0 312) 413 15 13
Faks : (0 312) 418 07 39

Appendix 5

CONSENT FORM
(Paper-based version)

Research Title: Investigating English Teachers' Views on the Concept of Learner Autonomy in 9th and 10th Grades in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey

Please
initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason before the process of data anonymization starts.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study by filling the questionnaire.

☐

I agree to be interviewed and I agree to the interview to being audio-recorded.

☐

I agree that the results of this research will be used in a thesis; they may also be used later in future reports, articles and presentations.

☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 6

INFORMATION SHEET

Study title: Investigating English Teachers' Views on the Concept of Learner Autonomy in 9th and 10th Grades in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey

You are being invited to take part in research study conducted by Betul Khalil, a doctoral student at the Open University, Faculty of Education and Language Studies. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information. The purpose of this study is to investigate English teachers' views on learner autonomy in 9th and/or 10th Grades in Anatolian High Schools. The findings may be very beneficial in furthering our understanding of the topic. The study will employ a combination of data collection methods, both quantitative and qualitative. The first source will be questionnaires, with a mix of closed and open questions and the second will be semi-structured interviews. Interviews will be tape-recorded. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an English teacher working at 9th and 10th Grades in an Anatolian high school. If you agree to participate; you will be one of 40 participants.

Your participation is voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason before the process of data anonymization starts. Please note that any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential. All the data will be secured on my personal computer in a password protected folder. You can opt in for the study by filling the consent form. The results of the research will be used in my thesis. They may be used later in my future reports, articles and presentations. The research has been approved by the Open University Research Ethics Committee and permission has been granted from Turkish Ministry of National Education.

Thank you for taking time to read the information sheet.

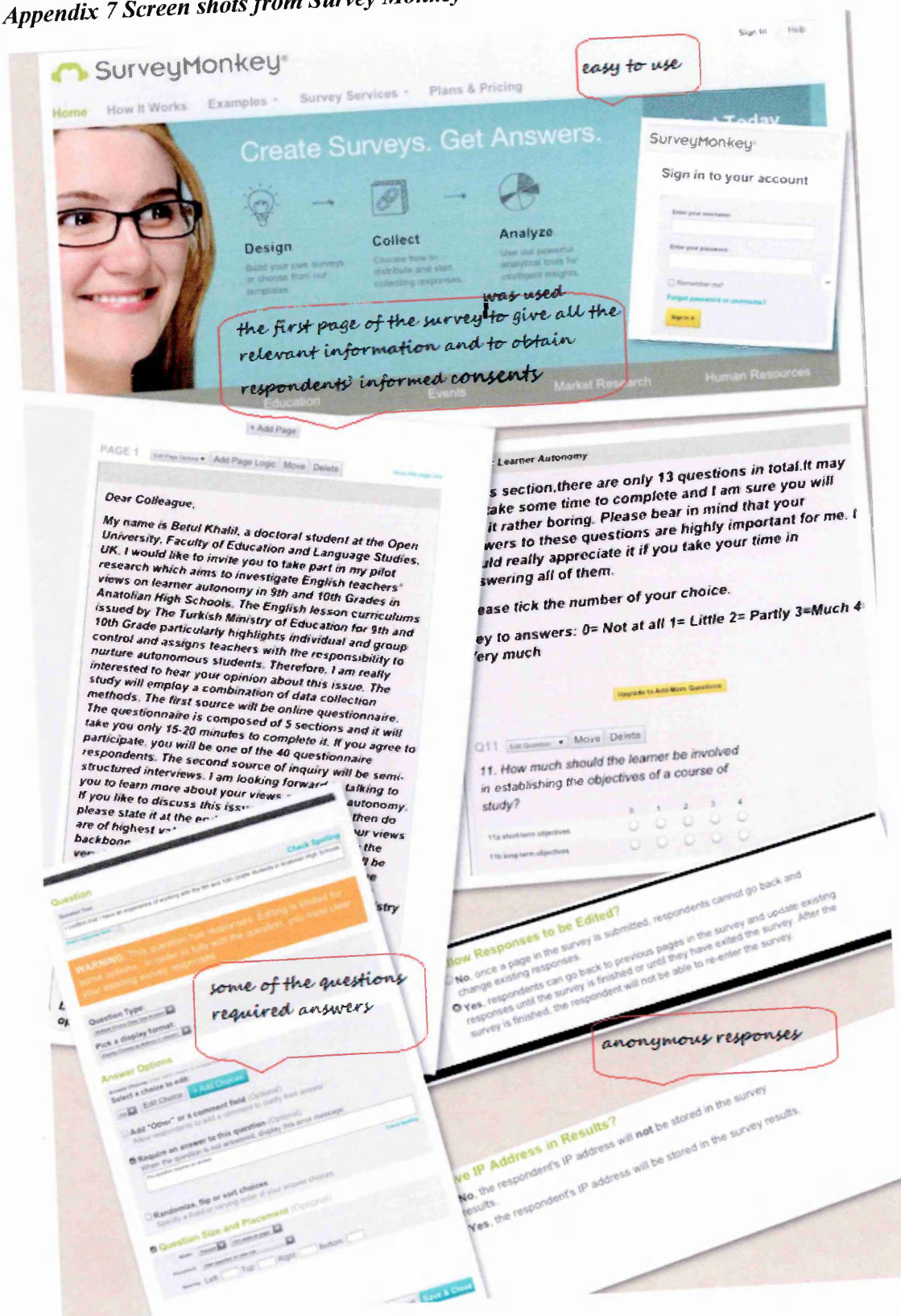
Betul Khalil

Research Student

Open University, FELS

CREET Betul.khalil@open.ac.uk

Appendix 7 Screen shots from Survey Monkey



Appendix 8 CONSENT FORM
(Interview study)

Research Title: Exploring 9th and 10th Grade English teachers’ views on learner autonomy in Anatolian High Schools in Turkey.

**Please
initial box**

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study before completing the online questionnaire survey.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason before the process of data anonymization starts.	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to be interviewed and I agree to the interview to being audio-recorded.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Date	Signature